

Message Text

SECRET

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USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 7077

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, CH
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE PRC IS A SENSITIVE ISSUE WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR
SINO-U.S. RELATIONS AND THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION. THE
PRC'S PERSPECTIVE IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN AND
PEKING COULD BE EXPECTED TO REACT STRONGLY TO OFFICIAL
U.S. CRITICISM OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA. TAIWAN AND
OTHER CRITICS OF THE PRC HAVE BEGUN TO UTILIZE HUMAN
RIGHTS AS A WEAPON AGAINST U.S.-PRC NORMALIZATION. HOW
SERIOUS AN ISSUE THIS MAY BECOME WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER
THESE CRITICS ARE ABLE TO DEVELOPE CREDIBLE EVIDENCE OF
SPECIFIC VIOLATIONS IN CHINA AS WELL AS ON HOW
STRICTLY WE DEFINE UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS.

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END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

1. THE ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAS CAUSED
AMBIVALENT FEELINGS IN CHINA. THE CHINESE HAVE
EXPRESSED SATISFACTION OVER THE DIFFICULTIES IT HAS
RAISED IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS BUT ARE CONCERNED THAT
IT WILL WEAKEN U.S. INFLUENCE AND TIES WITH THIRD-

WORLD COUNTRIES TO THE BENEFIT OF THE SOVIETS. THEY ARE ALSO SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN AS TO THE BASIS FOR THE NEW EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND HOW IT RELATES TO MORE TRADITIONAL ISSUES OF NATIONAL INTEREST, SECURITY AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. SEVERAL CHINESE MEDIA ARTICLES HAVE REGARDED IT MERELY AS A "SUPERPOWER" TRICK AND PART OF THE U.S. STRATEGY IN THE CONTEST FOR HEGEMONY WITH THE SOVIETS.

2. PART OF THE CHINESE SENSE OF UNCERTAINTY STEMS FROM AN AWARENESS THAT INCREASED ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN CHINA'S OWN RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WESTERN PRESS AND PRO-TAIWAN POLITICAL CIRCLES. THEY UNDOUBTEDLY REALIZE THAT BY WESTERN LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STANDARDS, CHINA'S RECORD IS NOT GOOD. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS A STEADY FLOW OF PEOPLE LEAVING CHINA, EMIGRATION IS HARDLY A RIGHT RECOGNIZED IN THE PRC. AS THE CANADIANS HAVE DISCOVERED IN THEIR FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROGRAMS AND AS WE HAVE LEARNED IN SEVERAL SPECIFIC CASES, THE ISSUANCE OF EXIT PERMITS BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES IS BASED HEAVILY ON POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND IS USUALLY ARBITRARY. ANY CLOSE SCRUTINY OF PRC POLICIES IN THIS AREA WOULD INEVITABLY RAISE QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE APPLICABILITY TO CHINA OF THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT ON GRANTING MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES ARE ALSO AREAS WHERE PEKING IS VULNERABLE TO ATTACK, AND THE TIBETANS HAVE ALREADY RAISED THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH SOCIAL
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CONTROL IN CHINA DEPENDS HEAVILY ON PEER GROUP PRESSURE AND POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION, AN EXTENSIVE PUBLIC SECURITY APPARATUS EXISTS AND NUMEROUS TRAVELLERS HAVE REPORTED SEEING POSTERS ANNOUNCING EXECUTIONS FOR "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY" CRIMES.

3. THE CHINESE ARE NOT APOLOGETIC OR DEFENSIVE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA. FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE, ONLY IN A REVOLUTIONARY, SOCIALIST COUNTRY LIKE CHINA CAN PEOPLE BE TRULY LIBERATED AND BE GIVEN THEIR FULL RIGHTS. THE CHINESE LOOK AT RIGHTS FROM A COMBINATION OF CHINESE AND MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUNDS. AS CHINESE, THEY IDENTIFY WITH THE TRADITIONAL LEGALIST SCHOOL OF THOUGHT WHICH HOLDS THAT A STRONG AUTHORITARIAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS NECESSARY TO WORK FOR AND PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE - OFTEN FROM EXCESSES OF INDIVIDUALS. THIS VALUE SYSTEM IS REINFORCED BY THE MARXIST VIEW THAT HUMAN RIGHTS CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM CLASS STRUGGLE. AS

FOREIGN MINISTER HUANG HUA HAS SAID, "PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST AN ABSTRACT TERM. THEY FALL INTO DIFFERENT CLASSES AND RIGHTS ARE DIFFERENT IN THE CASES OF DIFFERENT CLASSES." THIS VIEWPOINT WAS REITERATED BY VICE FOREIGN MINISTER YU CHAN WHO TOLD COLUMNIST WILLIAM SAFIRE THAT IN CHINA "OVER 95 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE OTHER 5 PER CENT, IF THEY ARE RECEPTIVE TO RE-EDUCATION, CAN ALSO ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS."

4. CHINESE AND WESTERN DEFINITIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT. ALTHOUGH BOTH WOULD AGREE ON THE "RIGHT" TO PHYSICAL SURVIVAL, PEACE AND A BETTER LIFE, THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THESE GOALS ARE ANTITHETICAL. TO THE CHINESE, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND HIS PERSONAL FREEDOMS AND PRIVILEGES, MUST BE CONTROLLED AND GUIDED. IF NECESSARY, HE MUST BE "RE-EDUCATED" TO SUBORDINATE
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INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS TO THE COMMON "GOOD". THE TERM "HUMAN" IS DEFINED IN A PLURAL (COLLECTIVE), NOT SINGULAR (INDIVIDUAL) SENSE. INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, THE KEYSTONE OF WESTERN FREEDOMS, ARE REGARDED IN CHINA AS THE CASUE OF THE MAJORITY BEING ENSLAVED AND EXPLOITED BY A SMALL MINORITY FOR THE LATTER'S ADVANTAGE. THE STATE AND PARTY ARE THUS NECESSARY TO EDUCATE AND GUIDE THE MASSES AND KEEP RECALCITRANT "BAD ELEMENTS" FROM CORRUPTING OR REVERSING THE PROGRESS TOWARD A CLASSLESS SOICIETY.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AS-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5065

INFO CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY TOKYO

S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 2 HONG KONG 7077

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP PROBABLY FEELS AS STRONGLY ABOUT THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR ITS SOCIETY AS WE DO ABOUT OURS. THEY ARE PROUD OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN CHINA SINCE 1949 AND ARE CONVINCED THEIR EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL RIGHTS RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THEIR SUCCESSES. OFFICIAL U.S. ATTACKS ON THEM FOR VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD LIKELY PROVOKE STRONG REACTIONS WHICH COULD LEAD TO A MORE INFLEXIBLE AND ANTOGONISTIC POSTURE TOWARDS THE U.S. AS LONG AS U.S. CRITICISM OF CHINA ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS RESTRICTED TO THE PRESS AND EVEN CONGRESSIONAL COMMENTARY, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WILL PROBABLY LIMIT REBUTTALS TO THE CHINESE MEDIA, THUS MAINTAINING THE PRETENSE OF GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA SEPARATION. THE CHINESE HAVE NEVER HAD ANY COMPUNCTION ABOUT CRITICIZING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF WESTERN OR U.S. SOCIETY AND POLICY IN THEIR PRESS. CRITICISM BY ADMINISTRATION LEADERS,
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HOWEVER, WOULD BE REGARDED AS INTERFERENCE IN CHINA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MIGHT WELL STIMULATE A MORE FORMAL RESPONSE.

6. ARTICLES IN THE PRO-PRC PRESS IN HONG KONG SUGGEST HOW THE CHINESE MIGHT RESPOND. THEY HAVE CALLED U.S. CRITICISM OF OTHER COUNTRIES' HUMAN RIGHTS FAILING "HYPOCRITICAL" AND "RIDICULOUS" IN LIGHT OF WHAT THEY CALL THE U.S.'S HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. THE LOCAL PRESS HAS ALSO TURNED THE ISSUE AROUND TO FOCUS ON THE MORALITY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, SPECIFICALLY ASKING WHAT MORALS ARE INVOLVED IN U.S. OCCUPATION OF CHINESE TERRITORY AND INTERFERENCE IN CHINA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WE EXPECT THAT CHINESE REACTION TO OFFICIAL CRITICISM, AS IS FREQUENTLY THE CASE, WOULD BE HIGHLY POLEMICAL AND PERHAPS PERSONAL.

7. TAIWAN HAS ALREADY SEIZED UPON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AS A WEAPON AGAINST FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARDS

U.S.-PRC NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. THE ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY GOAL OF ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS HAS BEEN LINKED WITH THE SECURITY OF THE ROC AND FIRST APPEARED AFTER SENATOR GOLDWATER'S RECENT VISIT TO TAIWAN. TAIWAN'S MEDIA HAS REPLAYED THE SENATOR'S CALL FOR A COMPARISON OF HUMAN RIGHTS "IN RED CHINA AND ON...TAIWANN." GOLDWATER ALSO CONTRASTED TAIWAN'S "EXTENSION OF FREEDOM AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY..., INCLUDING THE RAPID ADVANCEMENT OF THE ECONOMIC WELFARE OF THE ...PEOPLE" WITH THE PRC'S "TOTAL DENIAL OF THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS FROM THE CRUEL SUPPRESSION OF RELIGION TO THE WIDESPREAD SLAVE LABOR CAMPS..." THIS THEME WAS ECHOED IN AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER PUBLISHED IN THE PRO-TAIWAN HONG KONG PRESS IN LATE MAY. THE LETTER, WHICH WE BELIEVE WAS COORDINATED WITH ROC AUTHORITIES,

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URGES THE U.S. NOT TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH THE PRC BUT TO FOLLOW OUR "MORAL DUTY" OF UPHOLDING FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS. AN EARLIER LETTER, PURPORTING TO BE FROM A DISSIDENT IN SHANGHAI WHO DENOUNCED THE CHINESE SYSTEM AND APPEALED FOR U.S. SUPPORT, WAS PROBABLY ALSO THE WORK OF TAIWAN AGENTS IN HONG KONG. FINALLY, TAIWAN MEDIA HAS WARNED THAT IF THE U.S. YIELDS TO PRC DEMANDS TO ABROGATE THE DEFENSE TREATY AND BREAK RELATIONS WITH THE ROC, THE U.S. "WOULD FORFEIT ITS RIGHT TO BE A CHAMPION OF THE FREE WORLD IN DEFENDING FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS." SIMULTANEOUSLY, TAIWAN IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN A CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE ITS OWN HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE.

8. THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEBATE OVER HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA ADD ANOTHER COMPLICATING AND POSSIBLE EMOTIONAL FACTOR TO OUR ATTEMPTS TO MOVE TOWARDS NORMALIZATION. TAIWAN'S DUAL STRATEGY OF EXECRATING THE PRC WHILE EMBELLISHING ITS OWN RECORD TO INFLUENCE U.S. PUBLIC OPINION WILL LIKELY INCREASE SHOULD THE U.S. APPEAR TO BE MOVING CLOSER TO NORMALIZATION. IF PAST PERFORMANCE IS ANY INDICATOR, PEKING MAY PROVE TO BE ITS OWN WORST ENEMY IF THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA BECOMES A MAJOR ISSUE OF PUBLIC DEBATE IN THE UNITED STATES. WHETHER IN FACT IT DOES BECOME A SERIOUS ISSUE WILL DEPEND IN PART ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH CRITICS OF THE PRC ARE ABLE TO DEVELOP CREDIBLE EVIDENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CHINA. THE IMPACT ON US-PRC RELATIONS WILL BE DETERMINED IN LARGE PART BY THE LEVEL OF THE U.S. RESPONSE AND HOW WE DEFINE A MINIMUM INTERNATIONAL STANDARD OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

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Message Attributes

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